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SUBJECT: AUSAID RESPONSE TO POST-ELECTION ASSISTANCE IN
AFGHANISTAN

REF: (A) CANBERRA 00674 (B) STATE 74362

11. (U) SUMMARY: AUSAID officials have provided further comment in response to points raised on July 20 regarding assisting Afghanistan following the August presidential election. They have also supplied additional information detailing their approach to development assistance in Afghanistan. End Summary.

12. (U) AUSTRALIAN COMMENT ON POST-ELECTION ASSISTANCE: Begin Text:

Australia welcomes the forward-looking objectives of the non-paper. We see value in assessing the performance and direction of development assistance in Afghanistan in order to better target and coordinate donor support.

We would be grateful for any further information on the proposed Civilian Review. We remain keen to engage with the US in the development of other sector strategies and to discuss how best to develop the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan to deliver services to its population.

Australia agrees that aligning program planning and implementation with Afghan government priorities is vital. Australia has received positive feedback from the Afghan government when we have provided civilian assistance that has responded to needs identified by the relevant Ministries.

In the agriculture sector, we are considering support to Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Change Management program and are working with the Ministry to provide civilian assistance to help donor coordination, dry-land farming and possibly small-scale irrigation.

Australia is increasing its focus on sub-national governance and capacity building, particularly in Oruzgan Province and is working with the Afghan government and other stakeholders on improving service delivery, rural development and livelihoods.

We would like to have further discussions with the United States on how donors and in particular, RC South donors can more effectively work together to assist the Afghan Government to deliver services at the provincial and district levels.

We also look forward to close cooperation with the United States to identify options for expanding implementation of the National Solidarity Program in conflict affected areas and to improve the performance of other key national programs in the South. End Text

13. (U) AUSTRALIAN APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN: Begin Text

WORKING AT THE PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Australia's concurrent work at both the national and provincial levels recognizes the reality that Afghanistan is a unitary state and it is the national line agencies that are responsible for service delivery. Achieving gains in the provinces requires strengthening linkages to the national level. Australia will provide support, in the form of expert advisers, to key ministries including the Ministries of Rural Reconstruction and Development, Agriculture, Health and Education, through its Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan (DAF A). Australia also supports the capacity building of key ministries and delivery of services through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. These efforts will be underpinned by an increasing focus on strengthening the capacity of government at the provincial level, a commitment made by our Prime Minister in April 2009. For example, we are providing capacity building support to the Oruzgan directorate of the Ministry of Energy and Water. In Oruzgan Australia works through trusted partners such as the World Bank and international and local NGOs and contractors that can access conflict affected areas.

PARTNER-LED DEVELOPMENT

Our work at provincial and national levels is underpinned by the emphasis Australia places on partner-led development. Australia places a priority on close consultation with the Afghan government at both the national level and with provincial government in Oruzgan. Australia works to priorities identified by the Afghan government. For example, we are working to respond to the Ministry of Agriculture's request to identify and support advisors for the agriculture sector. Strengthening government planning, coordination and budgeting processes also helps support the Afghan government's capacity to lead the donor community. Australia's engagement with the Afghan government is led by two Development Advisers in Oruzgan and a Counselor in Kabul (deployment date to be confirmed). Australia also has three contracted in-country staff who administer our bilateral assistance facility (DAF A) as well as a locally engaged staff member.

DONOR COORDINATION

Australia also places a priority on coordination with other donors nationally and in the south. Australia is also working with and through UNAMA to provide an agriculture expert to undertake a donor coordination role in the Ministry of Agriculture. Australia is also in discussions with the World Bank and other donors to develop approaches for more effective delivery of services at the provincial and districts level in the south and east through the National Solidarity Program. Our new Counselor in Kabul will play an important role in coordinating Australian efforts with other donors. End Text

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